

Appendix C Comments from Community Forums (Fall 2002)

(These figures are based on written comments from the second round of meetings and do not include letters, telephone calls and email messages received by members of the team. Responses were written on large easel pads and have been transcribed verbatim. For that reason, there are some incomplete thoughts and misspelled words.)

Alternative A

- 17 positive (25.3%)
- 5 negative (7.5%)
- 4 neutral (neither positive nor negative) (6%)

Alternative B

- 2 positive (3%)
- 3 negative (4.4%)
- 6 neutral (9%)

Alternative C

- 8 positive (12%)
- 3 negative (4.4%)
- 10 neutral (15.4%)

Combination A + B

- 4 positive (6%)

Combination A + C

- 1 positive (1.5%)

Combination A+B+C

- 4 positive (6%)

TOTAL = 101.5% (Discrepancy due to rounding off figures)

(Note that respondents were not given the option of combination comments, but did so of their own accord. Combination comments (e. g., A+B) may have been higher had that option been made available.)

St. Simons Island, GA

Alternative A

1. I believe that one positive aspect of this proposal is that existing lands would be used.
2. Having the 3rd site in McIntosh County would be in tying in important Gullah Heritage sites in this area. (The Moran family, Sapelo Island, Plantations (Butler Island and Hofwyl- Broadfield, Historic African- American Communities (Jewtown, Harrington), Historic Sites (slave cabins, remains of slave hospital, Neptune Park), and the traditions that have been preserved (net-making, basket weaving, and storytelling) that are currently at risk of being lost forever.
3. Would this alternative include grants to acquire and preserve local sites such as the Harrington School? The school is very important to the community.
4. Plan A could bring jobs for local Geechee people. It would work good with C and B.

Alternative B

1. I would be very concerned that sites which have not traditionally been inclusive would be willing to change their interpretation, *i.e.* rice plantations.
2. I would like to know how the Gullah/Geechee people feel about these proposals.

Alternative C

1. Most flexible, able to include structures such as Harrington Schoolhouse
2. How will we ensure that the “heritage area” will become self-sufficient? (I would hate for the program to get off the ground with start-up funding, and then not have money to ensure this program’s longevity.

Charleston, SC

Alternative A

1. Affirmative effort to assist the preservation of heirs’ property (financial and educational resources)
2. Emphasis on creating new bureaucracy makes this the least attractive alternative, but many specific elements of Alternative A are desirable. Personally, I prefer a mix of the 3 alternatives with emphasis on grassroots initiative of a heritage area.
3. Not only the aforementioned crafts were performed but the multitude of skills it takes to build a nation as blacksmithing, building technology, medical and midwifery to name a few. Where are the institutions that taught the Gullah as such? Or did they come from Africa knowing how to build and maintain the culture since those are only a few elders left doing the crafts and so forth. These institutions need to be established in the Gullah Geechee connection. – Elder Halim, Gullah Geechee Nation
4. A needed complement to A & B, if either is selected would be to make sure info is available for students and non-students on the process to move into various employment positions, i.e. park manager, archeologist, naturalist, internships, scholarships, curator, conservation, etc.
5. “Living” interpretive centers would be important to expose/present Gully storytellers, craftspeople, musicians, etc. from within the grassroots community. The support of these “griots” as living historians would make the centers embody the very people who preserve the Gullah Culture in their own way – in this way, an institutional connection – complete with resources (e.g. human and fiscal) would serve as an economic development and cultural model for the region.

Alternative B

1. Is there a site further north of McClellanville that could be considered? Either in the Grand Strand or Little River or even Wilmington since it’s still fuzzy to many that the G/G community begins in southern NC.
2. This alternative includes sites that are not traditionally associated with the Gullah Geechee story.
3. Geographically Gullah culture may be said to extend from Cape Hatteras, NC south to St Augustine, FL. Efforts should include Florida Gullah communities and sites. I favor a mix of the 3 alternatives presented, with emphasis on Alternative C and the establishment of a National Heritage Area.
4. I like the idea of using established facilities: B, but also think renovations need to occur on such historical facilities as in A and perhaps having those “link up” to create a broader range with each having a special addition to the G/G Culture.
5. The aspect of storytelling should include the Gullah wars from 1739- 1848 along the Black Border. – Elder Halim Gullah Bemi, Gullah Geechee nation
6. The first principle of community-building is to solve problems and create solutions for maximum impact. In the same way rice is “hard” to grow in the city of Charleston (environmental issues), so too is it difficult to reach large numbers of interested visitors/tourists/groups in rural areas. Cities are hubs – major concern/rethink. Should identify the 4th most visited city in the US with over 2 million visitors as a site. Compare these numbers to arriving visitors elsewhere (Rantowles, Awendaw, etc) Where do we “site” for greatest impact. Fish in a full pond.
7. B and A make a good choice together.

Alternative C

1. A grassroots endeavor could lead to a viable and productive 501- C3. For those wanting minimal federal involvement, this could work.
2. Make sure local community get involved in helping promote and preserve the culture by using local artist and organization. Empowering the people through the Culture.
3. Requirements for state legislation may be onerous, particularly for a grassroots coalition.
4. What would be the process for a start- up foundation/organization to receive assistance from the NPS or the State?
5. Alternative C involves the group's responsibility to interpret its own existence. The preferred Alternative C can be melded with elements of Alternatives A and B.
6. A national Gullah/Geechee corridor is extremely important because that area was the economic foundation of the states that will make up the corridor. These states until after the Civil War had an agricultural economy. Open land cattle raising, rice and indigo were the basis of that agricultural economy. The knowledge and the people responsible for the success of that economy were enslaved Africans, and the seed rice that that introduced the rice culture was the seed from Africa, unlike the myths created by A. S. Salley, Jr. and Duncan Haywood. It was not the alleged "seed from Madagascar." That knowledge was what made South Carolina the second wealthiest colony prior to the Revolutionary War.
7. How does the plan address the URBAN Gullah/Geechee experience? The planter/plantation model overlooks and makes it hard to include the experiences of Gullah/Geechee people who ere urban – sellers of vegetables and fish, cooks, housekeepers, nurses, craftsmen, blacksmiths, drivers, gardeners, stablemen, sail makers. How do Robert Smalls and Mary (the Pringle cook at 27 King St) fit into this model?
How is this diversification, transition, and modification of Gullah Culture addressed?
How do cities – like the one this forum is in – help organize and preserve this legacy of culture?
8. Could A and C work together? A could help anchor C.

Georgetown, SC

Alternative A

Atlantic Beach (pop. 400, rural, low income) historic black- owned and operated resort town. First Missionary Baptist Church – Gullah music
Gullah speech patterns, food
Fishing economy in 1930's
Tourist Attractions during segregation
- - Sherry A Suttles, President Atlantic Beach Historical Society 843.272.7444

Alternative B

No Comments

Alternative C

No Comments

Savannah, GA

Alternative A

1. This plan seems to meet the needs of all involved. – L R Morris
2. Seems to have the greatest public benefit. – John Jameson
3. Centers are well spaced and see to offer a diverse experience at sites. Please look (still) at local interpretive efforts in an attempt to complement stories, etc.

4. Consider adding exhibit of industry with living history or other interpretive styles. If people knew what it entailed (painful process of picking), they could develop a personal connection to the people, lifestyle, and hardships.
5. The idea of letting well- qualified individuals from the Gullah/Geechee community [get involved?] is a great idea. Involvement of the Gullah community will allow everyone to make an impact.
6. Gullah Geechee people are not in a position to determine the direction, definition, etc. of their culture under Alternative A. The NPS will have a larger role in dictating the preservation of our culture. We deal with academics who misrepresent our culture on a daily basis (see Dale Rosengarten “sea grass baskets” comments as one example of misrepresentation of the culture. - - A Jamal Toure, Council of Elders, Gullah/Geechee Nation
7. I like the idea of multiple partners and parks interpreting the cultural [sic] in their area. Each group of people are particular to the area they live in. Will give a complete picture/focus of the entire Gullah/Geechee cultural [sic].
8. Cultural site preservation efforts (private and state) should be somehow considered into [sic]

Alternative B

1. Alternative B is the second best choice in this process. Alternative B allows some room for Gullah Geechee people to have a say in their story and culture. Alternative A is sorely lacking in this respect. This Alternative B provides us with a means to be the caretakers of the culture.
2. Alternative C is the best plan for the Gullah Geechee people to tell their story and preserve their culture. –A Jamal Toure, Council of Elders, Gullah/Geechee Nation.

Alternative C

1. Alternative C is the best plan with regards to Gullah/Geechee people determining and defining their history and culture. We will play a significant role in the preservation of our culture. We will not be on the outside. – A Jamal Toure, Council of Elders, Gullah/Geechee Nation
2. Consider First African Baptist as a potential partner for Alternative C
3. If “African Americans” is on paper, then in person at site should be a person who as lived it and can speak Ogeechee.
4. Alternative C seems more in line with a culturally- specific community such as the Gullah- Geechee Nation

St. Helena Island, SC

Alternative A

1. Georgetown County is an important part of the Gullah/Geechee Culture, yet it has not been considered in any of those alternatives. Don’t, I repeat, don’t forget Georgetown County and its Gullah/Geechee Community and people. There are partners available. Hobcaw Barony has an enslaved African Village and a rice field.
2. This is a living culture, spread over three states. To put centers in certain areas does not assist Gullah People in preserving and benefiting from their own culture. We are not museum pieces.
3. This alternative seems fine, however, my concern lies with the ownership of cultural assets – be it the interpretation of the history itself or the physical assets such as buildings, etc.
4. I believe this Alternative A is good because of its potential to utilize local experts who will tell and demonstrate the “true story.” The fear I have is that NPS will flex its muscle and try to control and direct the entire program.
5. This plan A supports the concept of clusters among Gullah communities which makes the effort of preservation more manageable.
6. Plan A is the best of all alternatives. It allows total involvement of existing organizations and will allow operation for at least 100 years and allow the artifacts to come back to Penn for research and the education of the young generations.
7. Penn Center is a great resource and needs National Park Service Funding.

8. Put Atlantic Beach on the map, please!
9. Alternative A appears to offer a future for expression of our culture and creativity through perpetuity, putting this special study on par with Mt Rushmore and Grand Canyon.
10. Alternative A of all the potentials appears to be the best of all presented. It is all inclusive of the areas; it will not require land purchase, it allows operation of the facility in perpetuity in all the locations. It allows involvement of the community, the existing organizations, and the National Park Service.
11. I think all 3 are good.

Alternative B

1. This alternative does not enhance the culture, but gives the incentive to others to tell a story of people they have not recognized before.
2. This would give to those who have ignored the culture the ability to control a culture that they have tried to destroy. The best way to preserve and enhance our culture is to leave it to Gullah's to interpret and preserve.
3. The parks [in Alternative B] may not reach as many people as the cultural sites [Alternative A], and the sites in Alternative C.
4. Atlantic Beach needs to be on the map.
5. Need grants on the local level for 501 C- 3's community- based organizations

Alternative C

1. Gullah Festival of SC, Inc should be in the list of potential partners, PO Box 83, Beaufort, SC 29901.
2. Sandy Island and Little River
3. Don't include Chambers of Commerce
4. Include Atlantic Beach – only remaining black- owned and erected incorporated town. Beach resort created in 1930's to house maids from Myrtle Beach. Later medical professionals and entrepreneurs bought in. Since integration and 2 hurricanes (Hazel '54 and Hugo '89), town is deteriorating rapidly. Musical giants like Ray Charles, Marvin Gaye, Chubby Checker stayed/played here. Tourists from AV to FL came. Now draws 400,000 from as far away as NYC for Memorial Day Weekend Bike Fest, BUT they stay in Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach, etc. while our town is dying. We need your help drawing attention, funding Visitor Center, oral history, motel preservation, acquisition, etc. – Mary A Suttle, Pres. Atlantic Beach Historical Society
5. I am not particularly interested in the Park Service creating interpretive centers where the Gullah Culture is involved, however, if it must happen, I would prefer Alternative C.
Gullah is a living, breathing culture, not made for museums. We as a people need assistance holding on to our land. The land is tied to the culture. If we lose our land, we lose our culture. Give people the chance to preserve their own culture. –E A Santagati
6. There was a comment that the proposed heritage corridor was too large or unwieldy. That will not be the case if local people in each micro- area of the proposed corridor are made an integral part of the future planning. If that is done, there will be cohesion among the various groups, which will ensure the success of the corridor.
7. Plan C – Best option to chain together existing cultural places without artificial form of Plan A. Each place gets to define own special aspects. Can be developed to support those special things of each community without changing the character of the site.
8. Need grants for local community projects.

Jacksonville, FL

There were no written comments from this meeting. Only 2 people other than the project team attended the meeting.

Letters and Email Messages

The team received supportive letters from a number of potential partners throughout the study area (i.e. state and county governments, non-profit organizations, federal agencies, preservation organizations). There was also a lengthy document from Marquette L. Goodwine, founder of the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition (GGSIC). Goodwine expressed opposition to all alternatives, but found Alternative C to be least objectionable. She also indicated that she wished to speak at any congressional hearings that may be held with regard to the alternatives. About 12 members of the GGSIC sent form letter responses indicating their agreement with Goodwine's comments and her right to speak.